Employment Contracts: Legal Requirements and Responsibilities

Clear employment terms reduce disputes over pay, hours, location, holiday and notice. Employers should distinguish the legal requirement to provide written particulars from the wider contractual agreement governing the employment relationship.

1. Give the required written particulars on time

An employer must give employees and workers the principal written statement of employment particulars by their first day. It is a written statement of key conditions, not necessarily the whole employment contract. The wider written statement must usually follow within two months.

The principal statement covers matters including the parties, start date, job, pay, hours and variation, work location, holidays and probation. Information about sick pay, other paid leave and notice must also be available on day one.

2. Make working arrangements unambiguous

State the contracted hours, days and whether working patterns vary, along with rates of pay, overtime arrangements where relevant, breaks and the work locations. If employment may involve different sites or changing rotas, explain the rules clearly.

Use appropriate terms for permanent, fixed-term, casual and irregular-hours arrangements. Do not assume that a document label alone determines a person’s employment status.

Example | Changes in contracted days

An employee moves from five fixed days a week to three from 1 December. HR records the agreement and effective date, updates the written terms and retains the previous schedule. Holiday and pay records can then be interpreted against the correct arrangement for each period.

3. Manage changes through a fair process

Consult properly where terms need changing, considering individual concerns and relevant employee representatives. Record agreement, effective dates and any revised terms. Changes to written particulars generally need to be notified within one month.

Keep both current and earlier terms available so that payroll, holiday entitlements and historical decisions can be reviewed retrospectively.

4. Make policies and acknowledgements accessible

Provide procedures and policy documents in a format workers can access. When a document is revised, tell affected staff and keep an audit trail of the version issued and any acknowledgement.

Common errors employers should avoid

- Treating a generic offer letter as a complete day-one statement without checking mandatory particulars.
- Changing working hours without documenting the agreement and effective date.

How Assyst helps employers manage employment documentation

Assyst combines paperless onboarding, employee HR records, electronic contracts and company or site documents. Policies and individual documents can be issued through the staff app, with electronic acknowledgements retained against the employee record. When an employee's pay rate, working hours or employment conditions change, Assyst automatically recognises the change and generates a revised contract for HR to approve before it is issued to the employee for electronic signature. Once signed, the new contract is automatically added to the employee's HR file with a new reference number.

Discuss your workforce requirements with Assyst

Assyst Workforce Management is a workforce management platform for multi-site employers, bringing together HR and paperless onboarding, time and attendance, workforce scheduling, payroll calculations, task management and a mobile staff app. To discuss how Assyst could support your business, visit www.assyst.uk and contact us through the website.

Useful official sources

GOV.UK — Written statement of employment particulars
https://www.gov.uk/employment-contracts-and-conditions/written-statement-of-employment-particulars

Acas — Consulting about employment contract changes
https://www.acas.org.uk/changing-an-employment-contract/employer-responsibilities/consulting-about-employment-contract-changes

Acas — If contract changes are agreed
https://www.acas.org.uk/changing-an-employment-contract/employer-responsibilities/if-employment-contract-changes-are-agreed

General guidance for employers in Great Britain, reviewed November 2026. Contract terms and individual circumstances may require professional advice.